

1. Should I Stay or Should I Go?

There are different monks with regard to their walking and residing habits. Some monks spend most of their time walking (travelling), some spend decades in the same residence, and some more or less alternate between these two. The Buddha has recommended moderation in four *suttas*, one after another, in *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 5.5.3(23) *Dīghacārika Vagga* . The translation below is from "*The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*" by Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2012; p.826-828.:¹

1. *Paṭhamadīghacārika Sutta* (Lengthy Wandering (1))

"Bhikkhus, there are these five dangers for one who engages in lengthy and unsettled wandering. What five?

- a) One does not hear what one has not heard;
- b) One does not clarify what one has heard;
- c) One is not confident about the portion that one has heard;
- d) One contracts a severe illness
- e) And one has no friends.

These are the five dangers for one who engages in lengthy and unsettled wandering.

"Bhikkhus, there are these five benefits in periodic wandering. What five?

- a) One gets to hear what one has not heard;
- b) One clarifies what one has heard;
- c) One is confident about somethings one has heard;
- d) One does not contract a severe illness;
- e) And one has friends.

These are the five benefits in periodic wandering.

2. *Dutiyadīghacārika Sutta* (Lengthy Wandering (2))

"Bhikkhus, there are these five dangers for one who engages in lengthy and unsettled wandering. What five?

¹ To avoid copyright issues I have omitted footnotes (endnotes) and changed formatting. I have also included the Pāli names of the *suttas*.

- a) One does not achieve what one has not yet achieved;
- b) One falls away from what one has already achieved;
- c) One is timid about some things one has achieved;
- d) One contracts a severe illness;
- e) And one has no friends.

These are the five dangers for one who engages in lengthy and unsettled wandering.

Bhikkhus, there are these five benefits in periodic wandering. What five?

- a) One achieves what one has not yet achieved;
- b) One does not fall away from what one has already achieved;
- c) One is confident about the portion that one has achieved;
- d) One does not contract a severe illness;
- e) And one has friends.

These are the five benefits in periodic wandering.

3. *Atinivāsa Sutta* (Residing Too Long)

“Bhikkhus, there are these five dangers in residing too long [in the same place]. What five?

- (1) One comes to own and accumulate many goods;
- (2) One comes to own and accumulate many medicines;
- (3) One takes on many tasks and duties and becomes competent in the various things to be done;
- (4) One forms bonds with householders and monastics in an unsuitable way typical of laypeople; and
- (5) When one departs from that monastery, one departs full of concern.

These are the five dangers in residing too long [in the same place].

“Bhikkhus, there are these five benefits in residing for a balanced period [in the same place]. What five?

- (1) One does not come to own and accumulate many goods;
- (2) One does not come to own and accumulate many medicines;
- (3) One does not take on many tasks and duties and become competent in the various things to be done;
- (4) One does not form bonds with householders and monastics in an unsuitable way typical of laypeople; and
- (5) When one departs from that monastery, one departs without concern.

These are the five benefits in residing for a balanced period [in the same place].”

4. *Maccharī Sutta* (Miserly)

“Bhikkhus, there are these five dangers in residing too long [in the same place]. What five?

- a) One becomes miserly with dwelling places,
- b) Miserly with families,
- c) Miserly with gains,
- d) Miserly with praise,
- e) And miserly with the Dhamma.²

These are the five dangers in residing too long [in the same place].

Bhikkhus, there are these five benefits in residing for a balanced period [in the same place]. What five?

- a) One does not become miserly with dwelling places,
- b) Miserly with families,
- c) Miserly with gains,
- d) Miserly with praise,
- e) And miserly with the Dhamma.

These are the five benefits in residing for a balanced period [in the same place].”

2. Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda – The Fabulous Treasury of Relics

Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda (ရွှေတရံဇေတီ) in Mon's Thaton (သထုံမြို့) is fabled to enshrine four Buddha's Tooth Relics (hence it is also known as “Four Relics Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda”. According to <http://khuntannwe.blogspot.com/> , in 15th of March 2014 the pagoda celebrated its 2600th anniversary.

“Shwe Saryan Pagoda was built by King Thuriya Sanda. and believed to have enshrined eight hair relics of Kakusana Buddha. the staff of Gonaguna Buddha. the emerald alms bowl of Kassapa Buddha and four tooth relics of Gautama Buddha. in addition to gold images. It was built on Thuna Pranta Hill. Gautama Buddha arrived in Thaton on the first waning moon day of Thadingyut of 105 Maha Sakarit. He was taking leave of Weluwun Monastery donated by the king after four months when the king implored Him and He gave the four tooth relics. They were enshrined in gold. silver and ruby caskets.

Then Buddha was implored to give a name to the pagoda whereupon Buddha was said. to name it Shwe Saryan for its longevity. It is 251 feet high. with Mya Thein Tan Pagoda or Thagya Pagoda in the east. with Shwe Chegan Pagoda on its platform. and Pitakataik Pagoda in the north.”

<http://myanmartravelinformation.com/mon-state/shwe-saryan-pagoda-thaton.html>

“The Shwesaryan Pagoda in Thaton is said to have been built in the 5th century B.C. enshrining four tooth-relics of the Buddha. It has been built over and has now assumed a modern shape with a circular base and a bell-shaped superstructure.

² The commentary explains this refers to *pariyatti*, theoretical learning of Dhamma.

It consists of three high square terraces and a bell. The lower base is 104 feet square and 18 feet high while the upper terraces are proportionately diminished in size. The third storey and the conical superstructure have been rebuilt and the whole building was renovated from time to time. Projecting from the centre of each of the walls below the two upper terraces and facing the cardinal points are deep and high niches adorned with arches. Each of these niches now enshrines a standing image of the Buddha. Besides these high niches there are smaller ones sunk in the dado below the second terrace to which access is given by four flights of steps. Originally there were embedded in them 64 terracotta plaques bearing bas-reliefs. A large number of them are now missing and those still in their original places are either broken or damaged and have been coated with layers of whitewash which render the figures almost invisible. However, among the very few reliefs that are still extant scenes illustrating the Vessantara, the Vidhura, the Maha-ummagga or Mahosadha, the Bhuridatta and the Temiya Jatakas could be identified. These reliefs can be assigned, stylistically, to the 11th-12th century.

Within the precincts of the Shwesaryan pagoda were found seven inscribed stones, five in early Mon of 11th century, one medieval and the seventh illegible. These are now preserved in a tazaung or wat within the compound. Among the stone sculptures collected in the same building is a figure of standing Buddha depicted in bold relief on a sandstone slab. His right hand is hanging on his side with the palm facing outwards in the boon-giving pose, varada mudra. His left hand is held upwards with the fingers in argumentative attitude. On the two sides of the nimbus above the shoulders are two hamsa birds also in relief, facing each other. The sculpture seems to be a prototype of those in the Ananda temple at Pagan and may be ascribed to the 10th-11th century.

Across the road outside the pagoda compound is the Kalyani Sima built on the remains of an old one. Around that ordination hall may still be seen the boundary pillars in sandstone with stories from the Mahanipata or the Ten Great Jatakas carved in relief. These sculptured pillars belong to the 11th-13th century as evidenced by an inscription on one of them.

Referenced to the book "Historical Sites in Burma" by U Aung Thaw.

It is mentioned in the book "Shwe Sar Yan Chedi - Thuwunnabomi" by U Aung Myint Aung, the original donor of this pagoda is King Suriya Sandar, and the date of the original construction of the pagoda is around 5th century BC. However, the facts could not be verified."

<http://www.myanmar-image.com/mawlamyaing/swhesaryan/>

The king Thuriya-Sanda (သုရိယဝန္တမင်း) who built the Shwe Sar Yan Pagoda enjoys great praise from the Pa-O people, who lived in Thaton during his reign there. It is since the time of that king that Pa-O celebrate their national day. (More info is available at <http://www.taunggyitime.com/2009/03/blog-post.html> .)

3. Dhamma Yan Kyi Pagoda - Strict Rules Secured Its Future

Dhammayangyi (Monument No. 771) (ဓမ္မရံကြီးဘုရား) of Bagan (north from Anawratha Road) was built by patricide, uxoricide, and fratricide in one single person - king Narathu (နရသမင်း) of 12th century AC. As it is the custom among Burmese, and as it is also mentioned many times in the Abhidhamma book of *Paṭṭhāna*, one kills his mother, kills his father, and then makes merit. (This, as the Burmese people know, doesn't rescue the sinner from his fate in hell - even though it may shorten the sojourn there.)

Dhammayangyi Pagoda is the largest in Myanmar, and some say it is the most important of them all. Its name is probably derived from then name Ashin Dhammaransi, son of king Narathu who became a monk and lived nearby the Dhammayangyi Pagoda. The pagoda's construction was finished within a single year. Or, actually, only the constructing - before the pagoda was completed, the king Narathu was murdered (at the age of 49) by a pack of Sinhalese or Indians (reportedly, because the king didn't take bodyguards with him when he went outside the palace). Nevertheless, the pagoda is one of the rare specimens of the Bagan era which survived without serious damage until today.

The bricks of the pagoda are laid in such way, that there is "no space in between". The king himself checked the "no-space" construction and if a worker was shown a space between the bricks he laid, the punishment was cutting off his hands (or fingers). Ma Thanegi explains: "The masonry work is so fine that there is hardly space for a needle tip to be inserted between the bricks. It is said that if he {i.e. the king} could insert a needle, he would have the mason's hands cut off."

The pagoda's plan is similar to that of Ananda Pagoda, but here only the outer corridor is accessible. The Pagoda also contains a statue of the Buddha at the Eastern Hall, which is made of a single marble slab.



Dhammayangyi from outside.



A hallway in Dhammayangyi.



The Marble Buddha.



The Portal of Dhammayangyi.

Literature:

- 1) "Bagan - 37 Pagodas & 37 Nats," Yenanthar Win maung, Myanmarpyithar Publishing House, Rangoon, 2015; p.46.
- 2) "Pictorial Guide to Bagan," [author unknown], Ministry of Culture - Archaeolog and National Museum Department, Yangon, 2015; p.35.
- 3) "Bagan Mystique," Ma Thanegi, Shwe Zin Printing House, Myanmar; p.30.
- 4) "ပုံ - စေတီပုထိုးများ" [Bagan Zedi-Pahto Myar], U Kyaw Aung, Popa Publishing House, Pazun Taung, 2014; p.27.
- 5) "လှူပ်တစ်ပျက် မဟာပုံ - A Glance at the Great Bagan" [Hlyat-Ta-Pyet Maha Bagan], Ye Nant Thar Winn Maung, Myanmar Pyi Thar Sape, Bagan, 2015; p.105.
- 6) Documentary video "Bagan, a Distant Glory".

I owe great thanks to Dr. Thaw Zin and Ko San Lin Aung, who donated me the necessary literature.

May all beings be happy,

monk Sarana